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. I. No. 2.

THE TRIUMVIRS OF FOUR-AND-A-HALF STREET.

NOVEMBER, 1881.

"The Board of Commissioners as at present organized, has been upon the whole, I think, the best city government in the world.

"RUTHERFORD B. HAYES."

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THE

TRIUMVIRS

OF

FOUR-AND-A-HALF STREET.

NOVEMBER, 1881.

"Nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice."

WASHINGTON, D. C.
R. BERESFORD, PRINTER, 523 7TH STREET.
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The following articles, modified here in some particulars, first appeared in THE CAPITAL, but the Editor of that paper is in no way responsible for them.

I hold the District Commissioners, and the clique behind them, responsible for the existence of the facts stated, and they are entitled to hold me responsible for their grouping and publication.

C. E. H.

OUR COMMISSIONERS.

A REVIEW, IN CHAPTERS, OF THEIR

ADMINISTRATION OF DISTRICT AFFAIRS.

To the EDITOR of THE CAPITAL:

"An excellent showing" is the heading of a "comparative statement of cash receipts and expenditures of the District of Columbia for the years 1878, 1879, 1880 and 1881," which appeared in the newspapers July 21, 1881.

This statement is the defense of Messrs. Dent and Morgan to charges brought against them. I propose to state the charges, examine the defense and draw a conclusion which shall be just to the public and to the Commissioners.

The Engineer Commissioner Not in Question.

To avoid repetition of explanations, I state here that no specific charge has been made against Major Twining, except a too ready assent to the wishes of his colleagues in regard to business especially under their charge. He appears to enjoy the respect of the people, has been repeatedly complimented on the floor of Congress, and is of acknowledged distinction in his profession. His management of the engineering operations of the District government is admitted to be able. Whenever in this paper, or others to follow, I use the word "Commissioners," I mean the Commissioners specially charged with the civil affairs of the District—Messrs. Dent and Morgan.

I.

FIRST CHARGE—WANT OF ECONOMY.

February 2, 1881, on the floor of the House, Mr. Aldrich said:

"They have never recommended, since I have been on the District Committee, the cutting down of the salary of a single officer, the abolition of a single office, and I believe so long as they retain their positions they never will."—38 *Rec.*, 5.

Mr. Cobb said:

"But I have talked with the Commissioners, and they always seem to be opposed to any proposition to reduce expenditures, &c.—38 *Rec.*, 6.

Mr. Neal said:

"And when we considered the District appropriation bill last session I was assured by one of the Commissioners that they would reduce the expense of that government at least twenty-five per cent. There is no reduction in this bill whatever."—38 *Rec.*, 4.

What is the "excellent showing" on this point?

The receipts in 1878 were $2,150,000, and in 1881, $3,823,000—an increase of $1,673,000.

The expenditures in 1878 were $2,247,000, and in 1881, $3,733,000—an increase of $1,486,000.

As the Commissioners plume themselves on adding a million and half in three years to the burdens upon the National and District treasuries, we must presume they will continue to add to them in the same ratio. If permitted, they will in another three years run the District expenditures to almost five and a half millions yearly, and, if they hold office long enough, they will make the District government the scandal of American politics.

It is true that in certain particulars there have been reductions. Most, if not all of these, have been forced by Congress. For instance, the Commissioners were about to contract with the Gas Company for several years at $28 per annum for each street lamp, when Congress, at the instance of the Secretary of the Treasury, stopped them. The company subsequently were glad to get the job at $25 a lamp. And thus did Congress force the Commissioners to reduce expenditures for street gas alone over twelve thousand dollars yearly. [Four thousand two hundred and thirty-three

lamps, at a saving of three dollars each yearly, amounts to $12,699.]

But in the health office Dr. Townshend, whose capacity for management equals that of his brother, the congressman, has seen his annual expenditure rise from $16,686 in 1878 to $26,928 in 1881; and the improvement and repair of streets, &c., which cost the large sum of $425,760 in 1878, rose in two years to the astounding figure of $660,882.

Under the head of "charities and corrections" the Commissioners show an increase from $88,047 in 1878 to $196,443 in 1881; and yet there was not half as much need of alms in the latter as in the former year.

I will stop here to state a little more in detail the facts in a single case, by way of illustration of the Commissioners'

Want of Economy.

In the early part of 1879 Congress made an appropriation of seventy-five thousand dollars to build two school-houses, and the Commissioners offered five hundred dollars for the best plan. From the plans so obtained the School Board selected two, and recommended that one school-house should be built on each plan. The Commissioners advertised for bids for the erection of buildings on these plans, and awarded the contracts; but, for some reason, then unknown to the public, the contractor did not begin work. It subsequently leaked out that he was held back to enable the senior Commissioner to perfect a plan of his own for one or both buildings.

While Mr. Dent was working away at his plan the prosperity "boom" of 1879 swept over the country, sending prices of labor and material to a higher figure. As a consequence the contractor, who was a poor man, failed, and his bondsmen insisted that the failure was not his fault—that he could have built the school-houses for the amounts agreed upon if he had been permitted to go on with the work when the contracts were awarded. The cause of the failure, they said, lay at the door of the executive office in Columbia Building.

The Commissioners appear to have acquiesced in this view of the case, for they released one of the bondsmen, and gave up the contract for the Henry Building to make room for a contract on the Dent plan; and they agreed to

pay the other bondsman extra, to go on with the Peabody Building—the difference between the cost of certain materials then and at the time the contract was entered into. This difference amounted to $3,462.66. So much at least the tax-payers have had to pay for the luxury of being ruled over by these eminently respectable "old citizens."

But the $3,462,66 was by no means the total loss, or the greatest misfortune of these transactions. They consumed the whole of the building season of 1879, thereby postponing the erection of these much-needed school-houses to another year, and subjecting the District to a loss of about seven thousand dollars in rents. Nor is this all. By abandoning the contract for the Henry Building, and entering into a new one on the Dent plan after prices had gone up, the Commissioners imposed upon the District an increased expenditure for an inferior building. Who would suspect that the contract price for the Force Building was over six thousand dollars greater than the contract price for the Peabody, or that the actual cost of the Force was nearly two thousand five hundred dollars greater than the Peabody, extras included? And yet such is the fact. Of course I do not include the cost of the fourth story of the Peabody, which is not common to the other building.

There is another view of the case. Whoever passes over Massachusetts avenue from Scott's statue to Stewart's castle will pass by what people generally take for a brewery. It is the house that Dent built in lieu of the Henry Building, and is named the "Force School-house." So great a carricature on architecture is it that the engineer Commissioner was once betrayed into the exclamation, "Do plant some fast-growing vines to cover the ugliness of this structure!" Its outside, however, is the least objectionable part of it. The inside is cramped and frittered away to make room for six large gossip parlors, and these are so located as to be practically inaccessible to parents who may need to confer with teachers.

The ventilating shafts are placed in the most exposed positions near the entrance doorways. But I forbear. Is it any wonder Congress should have taken away, by positive law, from these Commissioners, all authority over the plans of school buildings?

II.

I come now to the

SECOND CHARGE—GROSS INCOMPETENCY.

It is a matter of notoriety that the Representative who was in charge of the District appropriation bill last winter spoke in debate of the uselessness of consulting either Major Morgan or Mr. Dent about District affairs, alleging that they were profoundly ignorant of them and unable to give any intelligent information about them. He said also:

"From him (Major Twining) more than from any other man in this District I have obtained the information upon which I have acted in the preparation of this bill."

And again:

"I can say from my own knowledge of the duties that he (Major Twining) performs more actual service than either of the other two Commissioners."

This is very mild. He might have said more than both, and appealed safely to any man who has been unfortunate enough to have business to transact at the District offices.

Of their dawdling way of doing things Mr. Aldrich said:

"In June, 1879, when the last act was passed for making revisions, the Commissioners stated to the committee that the revision could probably be completed within three months; that is, by the 1st of October, 1879. They have been before Congress or the committee three or four times since for the purpose of having the time extended, and making promises that the revision should be completed within a few months. They fixed the time in April last; they fixed it in July; * * they fixed it in October; they finally fixed it in January of this year. * * * I believe, and I think every member of this committee will agree with me, that this revision could have been completed in six months' time, instead of being extended over three years."

In their report of February to the House committee on the District, the sub-committee, among other damaging things, says, that in violation of law "the Commissioners intrusted the entire preparation and issue of these drawback certificates to one of their clerks, and allowed them to be issued under his signature."

The same sub-committee finds the Commissioners guilty of "inefficiency."

It is quite impracticable to go over the multitude of illustrations of this charge. I can deal with it only by samples.

Take first their management of the

Public Markets.

The District has owned five of these. The net revenue from all these in the last four fiscal years the Commissioners show to have averaged annually $5,915.45, a little more than $1,000 each. (See, "an excellent showing.") They do not mention, however, the important fact that the District expended the following amounts in the erection of market houses: In 1876, $49,130.52, and in 1877, $10,893.73, making a total of $60,024.25; and that the market on the corner of K and Twenty-first streets has cost the District in all more than $100,000. It is doubful whether the whole net receipts from all the District markets is equal to five per cent. on the total cost of this one of them; and if we take the whole market business, including expenditures for building and repairs, from 1876 to the last fiscal year inclusive, there has been a dead loss on it of some forty thousand dollars!

It were better policy to let the markets to private parties who would pay rent and taxes on them. The Center Market Company alone pays the District $14,500 yearly in rent and taxes. But Messrs. Dent and Morgan will never get this idea into their heads. Like the brook, they run on forever in the same channel. Their management of the

Police and Criminal Court

business is as bad as that of the markets. Indeed, there is no management at all, so far as the public can see. For several years the newspapers have pointed out the shocking inhumanity of providing no food for a person arrested on Saturday afternoon until after his sentence in the Police Court on Monday morning. Whether any of the sufferers have died of this two days' starvation I do not know. What I do know is, that Major Morgan might absent himself from prayer meeting long enough to devise a remedy for a practice disgraceful to human nature. Are not these starving prisoners fit objects of the charity that scatters so much money over the District?

While the population of the District and misdemeanors are rapidly increasing, the Police Court cases are decreasing. The number stands as follows: In 1875, 4,864 cases; in 1876, 5,088 cases; in 1877, 4,537 cases, and in 1880, under the present Commissioners, 3,025 cases. (Since Mr. Morgan

ceased to be Major of Police there has been some improvement in this respect.)

The excess of fines, &c., over expenditures, was, in 1876, $9,282.70, and in 1877, $7,088.70.

The excess of expenditures over fines, &c., under the present Commissioners, shows a dead loss, as follows: For 1878, $3,389.16; for 1879, $3,727.81; for 1880, $3,895.22; or a total loss in three years of $11,012.19.

From the profit in 1876 to the loss in 1880, there is a chasm of more than thirteen thousand dollars!!

The Police System.

No one will claim that we have adequate or even tolerable police protection at the present time. It is proposed, as appears from a bill submitted to the last Congress, to add one hundred men to the present force, at a cost of about one hundred thousand dollars annually. If such increase of force is necessary, it should be granted; but before that is done the necessity should be clearly made out.

I understand there are now fifty-two mounted men on the force, and some forty of these are assigned to duty in the cities of Washington and Georgetown, where, experts tell me, they are about as useful as an equal number of equestrian statues. A big, fat policeman, mounted on a little, lean horse, (no uncommon sight nowadays,) insures pity for the horse and safety for the thieves. These men should be dismounted and restored to effective patrol duty. The amount thus saved in horse hire would pay for eight or ten men. Then recall at least twenty men now diverted to clerical or other irregular service. By such readjustment, there would be restored to effective service about seventy men. When this is done, it will be time enough to consider whether it is necessary to impose a hundred thousand dollars more in taxes to increase this branch of the District service.

Again, it is provided by law that all orders and directions to the police force shall be made through the Major of Police, the executive head of the force. But the Commissioner in charge of police matters, Mr. Morgan, has set aside this law, and habitually assumes to give orders himself direct to all grades of the force. If a lieutenant happens to disapprove of an order of the Major of Police, he

has only to apply personally to Commissioner Morgan, who, if he thinks proper, will grant permission to disregard the chief's order. The result any one can see.

In fact, the utter demoralization of the police is a notorious fact. It began when Major Morgan was superintendent. Under his "goody-goody" treatment, (I have never believed the story that the Major carried a supply of candy to give policemen—it was not quite so bad as that,) the most meritorious act of a policeman was to tempt some wretched street-walker, and arrest her; to threaten with arrest persons walking quietly over the fields on Sunday, or to steal the clothes of some little boy while he was taking a bath in the river. But as the judges did not sanction the enticing and larceny and Sabbatical methods of the Sunday-school superintendent turned detective, the police went all to pieces. Between 1876 and 1880, the cases reported by them fell off more than two thousand a year. They have been ordered not to enforce certain laws, or to enforce them in a certain way, or not to enforce them against certain persons, or in certain places, until they have become utterly confused as to their duties. Things have come to such a pass with them that *one* policeman cannot be trusted alone on a beat at night; there must be *two*. They are assigned beats they are not expected to visit; duties they are not expected to do. Large numbers of them are detailed for clerical work. It is said that thirty-four are now detailed on business not falling within their proper functions.

With the present force Major Brock could do something for the public protection if his duties were not constantly meddled with by a fussy superior, who thinks he ought to manage all the fires, regulate each policeman, detect every crime and keep everything and everybody in a stew. Between Judge Dent, who does nothing he can avoid, and Major Morgan, who does everything he ought not to do, and always does it wrong, I prefer the Judge.

Management of Paupers.

Last winter it was stated on the floor of the House that there were in this District 21,935 persons who receive charity, and that more than 35,474 prescriptions of medicine had been made for the poor and paid for by the District. This

was on information from the Commissioners. (Rec. 9, Feb. 1, 1881.) As the whole population of the District is about 178,000, the statement is in effect that one person in eight is a pauper!

The statement is preposterous; utterly so. No man with eyes to see or brains to think will accept an absurdity so gross. What! in the capital city of the nation, where several millions are yearly spent for labor, one person in eight a pauper! Rather state the fact as it is, that there are so many persons willing to accept the public money from an incompetent District government; and that, if Major Morgan and the professional friends of the poor who have him in hand are permitted to handle much longer the charity funds of the nation, they will demoralize the self-respect of the entire population of the District, and make Washington and its workmen more notorious than Naples and its lazzaroni.

It is a burning shame that the capital of this happy country is allowed to be overrun with professional beggars; that we keep public inns where tramps and vagabonds are fed and lodged without charge; that Washington is allowed to become the general rendezvous of dead-beats, monomaniacs and professional jail-birds; that a large and central part of the city is set apart for the undisturbed development of the social evil; that the streets and avenues show more than a thousand places for the sale of liquor, and saloons, licensed and unlicensed, springs from which flow streams of adulterated poison to desolate the homes of citizens, and that when we complain of all or any of these to the governors set over us, and ask that the laws be enforced, we get no answer except that of helpless imbecility—"We can do nothing."

I assert, without fear of contradiction by any sensible citizen, that the District charities and institutions for correction are as poorly managed as they are in any part of the United States; and all because there is not a glimmering of social or political science in the mind of either of the Commissioners charged with the care of these institutions. It passes belief that Mr. Hayes should have expected to find administrative ability in two men who had never shown any. Neither the being a third-class post-office clerk a quarter of a century before, nor ramming piles into the bottom of a canal, nor

working a dredging machine, would appear to most Presidents fitting preparation for municipal administration.

The newspapers lately reported Major Morgan as off on a tour to Baltimore, to study its modes of dealing with the seven great curses of modern large cities, and later, as "on the limited express for a week's tour among the reformatories at the North." He might have twenty years for the purpose, and at the end of his studies he would be like the Duke of Marlborough's baggage mule, which had gone through twenty campaigns and understood no more of military matters than when it began.

The Preparation of Bills for Congress

is an unavoidable duty of the Commissioners, and has been bunglingly performed.

The "municipal code" prepared under their supervision was no code, but a collection of all the ordinances of the cities and the levy court, the assembly laws and congressional statutes passed during the century. The collection was made with considerable care by one of the young and rising lawyers of the District, and, after having been hacked at and tampered with on Four-and-a-half street, was sent up to Congress under the name of a "code." Here it was got into moderately good shape by heavy work of congressmen, and passed the House. Had the Commissioners kept away from the Senate, it would doubtless have been still further improved and have passed that body also. But this was not to be. These officials hung around the Senate committee like the wind from Kidwell Bottoms around the White House, and with much the same effect. Every provision they touched seemed to be struck with malaria. I cite as a sample Mr. Dent's amendment to the chapter on public schools. He proposed to reduce the number of school divisions from seven to four, each division to have at least one trustee, and a fifth trustee was to be appointed at large, leaving it discretionary with the Commissioners whether to appoint the other fourteen trustees or not, and, if appointed, to take them from any locality they pleased—all from Georgetown, or all from any other town in the District.

Bear in mind that Mr. Dent resides in Georgetown, and then consider the modesty of his asking Congress to so

arrange the school divisions of the District as to give that little suburb and Uniontown, which combined have only sixty schools, equal voice in the management of school affairs with the great city of Washington, having over four hundred and sixty schools! As a pure gerrymander, Mr. Dent's amendment takes the medal. (See ex-Trustees' Memorial to Congress.)

For two winters Congress was flooded with such drivel in the form of amendments to the code, until finally the Senate, or its committee, got disgusted and tumbled the whole thing out at a side window, where it lies to-day, among the raw material which may hereafter, under happier auspices, be taken up, recast and made into law.

It is safe to say that among all the citizens of the District, Messrs. Dent and Morgan are among the least familiar with municipal law, and least competent to revise it. I will go further, and assert that they have never yet sent a bill to Congress which was not full of blunders.

Take, for instance, the bill passed March 3, 1881, which has recently been the subject of several legal opinions. Sections 3 and 6 are substantially the work of the Commissioners, whose object was to get power in regard to certain city lots, including the central guard-house lot: First to sell them at auction, partly for cash and partly on credit; second, to annul the highest bid, if unperformed, and sell to the next bidder; third, to convey the property; fourth to apply the proceeds of certain lots to building station-houses, and of certain others to building an engine-house.

All this is simple, but it was too much for these gentlemen. They drew a bill, the effect of which is: First, to empower them to sell at auction for cash only; second, to nobody but the highest bidder—if his bid is annulled, the sale is annulled; third, the power to make a deed is omitted; fourth, the power to buy lots for station-houses is omitted, while that to buy a lot for the engine-house is granted; fifth, the proceeds of lots mentioned in section 6 are directed to be applied to the use named in section 3. But there are two uses named in section 3. To which of them, pray, is the money to be applied?

But I can't dwell on this rather dry topic. Suffice it to say that Messrs. Dent and Morgan have never been able,

without aid, to draw a bill through the gaps of which Mr. Knox cannot drive any one of his wagons at full speed.

When Oxenstiern, the great Swedish chancellor, sent his son traveling among the courts of Europe, "Go my son," said he, "and see with how little wisdom the world is governed." If Oxenstiern were living in this age he would send his son direct to this District.

The Subordinates

in the District government, owing to the weakness of the Commissioners, are the rulers. In the annual reports it is they who make suggestions for legislation. Look at page 11 of the report for 1880. It is the secretary, auditor, collector, treasurer, health officer, major of police, &c., who make the recommendations for legislation, which are transmitted, without approval or disapproval, by the Commissioners. If the House committee wishes information about assessments, a letter from Mr. Roome is sent up; if about personal taxes, it is Mr. Fish who gives it, and so on to the end of the chapter. The Commissioners, knowing nothing, defer to subordinates, who know oftentimes more than they tell. Indeed, it is not to be denied that the brains of the District government are not in the head. No one knowing the parties will say that either Mr. Dent or Mr. Morgan equals in ability any one of the following subordinates: Tindall, Dodge, Vinson, Cook, Hoxie or Green. The sultan is not equal to his viziers. At the District building there is no head. The clerks work or not, as the chief in their respective rooms may require. Mr. Roome took three years to revise assessments instead of six months;* and if he shall think it advisable, he will take six years to straighten up the old records, if Messrs. Dent and Morgan continue so long in office. They cannot tell whether it ought to take him one month or six years, and Roome knows their helplessness.

I pass now to something more serious than incompetency:

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*It is said in defense of Mr. Roome that the Commissioners discharged his competent assistants to make room for Eppa Hunton's squad of Virginians; and the wonder is, with such a force, not that it took him three years to revise the assessments, but that he got through at all. The defense seems to have some force.

III.

THIRD CHARGE—DUPLICITY.

In a sharp correspondence, which my readers will remember, Mr. Gilfillan, United States Treasurer, made this charge in plain terms. The Pastor's Union made it in its published statement. The same thing is found against them by the sub-committee of the House. Mr. Aldrich's report says:

"They have disobeyed the requirements of the law, and have set up evasive pretexts for that disobedience; and on the plea of construing the acts of Congress as measures of relief, they have perverted them from their intent in order to relieve property-holders from taxes and penalties lawfully due; in all of which various acts and omissions they have been guilty of grave dereliction of duty, deserving censure."

That report was presented to the House committee February 21, 1881. The honor of the Commissioners required immediate action; but they thought more of safety than of honor. Their friend Mr. Hunton, for whom they had filled all possible vacancies in District offices with Virginians, saved them from trial. Some who did not know them thought they would resign. President Hayes did not like to turn out the protege of the bankers or a brother Methodist. The new Administration had more important matters to attend to; and before this could be taken up the pistol of the assassin saved these trembling men.

About the High School and Square 446.

In their report to the Commissioners (Com. Rep., 159,) for 1880, the trustees of the public schools take it for granted that the anuual appropriation of $100,000 for common-school buildings and sites will be made, and in addition thereto ask special attention to the urgent necessity of erecting a high-school building. They say:

"Suitable buildings for this purpose cannot be rented. We have, therefore, to recommend most urgently that the old Washington school fund, amounting to $70,630.49, now invested in 3.65 District of Columbia bonds, be appropriated to the erecting of a high-school building for the girls and boys of the white schools of the District, and that a part of square 446 be used as a site for the same."

In their report, page 5, the Commissioners say that they "cheerfully unite with the trustees in recommending again to Congress the appropriation to this object of the school

fund of $70,630.49, now invested in 3.65 bonds of the District of Columbia," &c.

As they could "unite with the trustees" on nothing but the recommendation of the latter to use that fund to build a high school on square 446, they were understood at first to be publicly pledged to that measure. The omission of reference to the usual $100,000 appropriation for common-school buildings was generally attributed to inadvertence and to the Commissioners' notorious want of exactness of statement.

As these Commissioners were known, however, to have been put into office by a clique hostile to the public-school system, it was thought best to watch their doings at the Capitol.

Late in December the proofs were conclusive that Messrs. Dent and Morgan were clandestinely using all their official influence to defeat the regular annual appropriation of $100,000 for the common-school buildings, to defeat the erection of any high-school building, and, above all things, to prevent the use of square 446 for that purpose. Meanwhile they had given to the friends of the schools what is known as "taffy," without stint as to quantity.

To organize resistance to these intrigues of Messrs. Dent and Morgan, a meeting was called January 7, 1881. (Cong. Rec., Feb. 2, 1881.) Mr. Dent was present and made a speech. Its gist was a confession of treachery and practical hostility to the school system, with profuse professions of love for it; in short, the Commissioners were determined to defeat the $100,000 appropriation; to send over the high school to the "sweet by and by," and to divert the Washington school fund from its proper object.

A committee of fifteen, appointed to conduct the fight, waited next morning on the Commissioners. On that occasion Commissioner Morgan developed himself fully in hostility to the measures advocated by the committee, and announced himself as determined to have the south half of square 446 for the market men. The battle being thus set, both sides went to work with Congress and its committees. It was a lively fight. The high-school men got the House and the Commissioners the Senate. Conference committees were appointed, and failed several times to agree. At one time it looked as though no District appro-

priation bill could pass; but on the last day but one, March 3d, the Senate conferees yielded, and the high-school appropriation was won.

The Two Letters.

In illustration of the charge of duplicity brought against the Commissioners, I propose now to put in parallel columns two declarations of Commissioner Morgan on the subject of the high-school.

The first is from a letter to Representative Samford, dated January 27, 1881, and read at his request February 2, 1881, to the House for the purpose of aiding to defeat the high-school bill in the alleged interest of market dealers.

The second is from the letter sent last June by the Commissioners to President Garfield, to palliate their conduct in proposing to appropriate the school children's play ground on square 446 as a site for a police station house, wherein to gather all the drunkards, ruffians and prostitutes found in that part of the city:

"Commissioner Morgan to Mr. Samford, Jan. 27, 1881.

"DEAR SIR: In answer to your inquiry as to the Commissioners having given their consent to the erection of a public school on the south side of square 446, or that they have recommended the same, I would state that, personally, I have always been opposed to diverting this property from its original purpose, for markets, to any other.

"As to the erection of the proposed high-school on the square named, I have been opposed to it all along, and so expressed myself to all who made any inquiry.

"Sincerely,
THOMAS P. MORGAN.

"N. B.—The Commissioners, as a board, have never recommended anything touching this subject."—*Cong. Rec.*, 38, page 19.

"The Commissioners to President Garfield, June, 1881.

"In reply, the Commissioners beg leave to state that they have never contemplated the erection of a market house on said square. On the contrary, they have more than once in their annual reports recommended to Congress the appropriation of this property, originally purchased for a market, to the uses of the public schools of this District; and during the last session of Congress they aided in procuring the passage of an act providing for the removal of the market sheds which have for several years occupied the same."—*See letter on Commissioners' files.*

These statements are not non-committal ones—Van Burenisms—leaving the mind in doubt

"Whether the snake that made the track
Was going South or coming back."

They are positive and willful misstatements; the first, intended to defeat the high-school bill by deceiving the House as to the past action of the Commissioners; the second, intended to ward off the just anger of President Garfield by falsely claiming to have aided in passing the same bill. Was ever shame like this?

The Same Letter.

Take one case more. The Commissioners proposed, and were getting ready to build, a police station-house alongside the Henry and High schools; and when citizens complained to them of this enormity they condescended, so the newspapers said, to shift the exact location a little farther from the Henry school and a little nearer to the High school.

Finding Morrison's Building against them, the citizens concluded to appeal to the White House. This brought the station-house outrage to a sudden halt; whereupon the Commissioners undertook to explain and excuse their conduct. I admit this was hard to do. But who, save these Commissioners, would have imagined they were defending themselves by telling the President in one paragraph that they had "proposed," "were considering," had "contemplated" erecting a station-house on the Seventh-street front of square 446, and in the next paragraph, that they knew Congress had "reserved" this front for another purpose? Here is what they say:

"In regard to the proposed erection of a police station-house on this square the Commissioners respectfully submit the following statement:

"'Congress at its last session provided for the erection of two police station-houses, but inadvertently omitted to provide for the purchase of sites for the same; * * * and, anticipating no objection to the use of a portion (the Seventh-street front) of this square for the purpose, they were considering the propriety of doing so,' &c. And again, 'it was contemplated to erect a station-house' on square 446,'" &c.—*Letter to President Garfield.*

"On the contrary, they (the Commissioners) have personal knowledge that the Seventh-street front of said square (446) being valuable business property, was especially reserved by Congress to be sold for the erection of other school-houses."—*Letter to President Garfield.*

This is duplicity, or something worse. If the Commissioners knew, as they say they did, that Congress had "reserved" this property for the erection of school-houses, then they were treating Congress with contempt in proposing to turn it over to the police; if they did not know Congress had so reserved it, then they ought not to have said so.

Corrupt Use of Power.

I doubt not the good people of the District have seen enough of their rulers as letter-writers. Perhaps they may now like to look at them as witnesses. I cannot say the spectacle will tend to flatter local pride, but it may tend to show the character and calibre of the men set to rule over them.

In the course of an investigation into District matters by a committee of Congress last winter, it was discovered that the Commissioners had been using their powers in the personal interest of one of their own number. The subcommittee having the matter specially in charge says:

"The assessments against the (Linthicum) estate were reduced by the Commissioners from $2,324.82 to $290.82, or 87½ per cent. * * * That the only assessment annulled on this ground ('jumping' the contract) was this one affecting the estate of which one of the Commissioners is a trustee, and his wife and son the beneficiaries. * * It appears that this was not a 'jumped' contract after all, in the sense in which that expression has been used. There were valid contracts for both the work on First street and the work on Water street. * * * The transaction is thus deprived of its last defense. It stands simply as an unlawful annulment by the Commissioners of an assessment lawfully levied on one of their number."

In the investigation which led the committee to the conclusion just quoted, Mr. Dent appeared as a witness for the purpose of clearing himself of having participated in this job. He swears to an *alibi;* says he was not present when the job was put through; although he admits he knew it was going to be put through, for he says he "declined to be present."

Mr. Dent on the Witness Stand.

Mr. Aldrich:

Q. "Do you know what Commissioners were present when the orders in relation to the assessments for the improvements ordered in 1879 were made?

A. "* * * I was not present. I declined to be present, or to have anything to do with it.

Q. "What was your connection with the Linthicum estate?

A "I was one of the trustees.

Q. "Who was the beneficiary?

A. "Mrs. Linthicum.

Q. "And who subsequent to her?

A. "In case of her death, my son, being of age, would be the beneficiary."

* * * *

Q. "You say you were not present at the time the order directing the reduction was made?

A. "I was not.

Q. "Will you be kind enough to furnish us with the records of the Commissioners' office at the time that order was issued?

A. "Yes, sir. I suppose it was recorded."

Second Day.

Mr. Aldrich. "In the examination of Saturday I asked you to bring with you to-day the records of the Commissioners, that we might be able to see who were present at the time the order was made in regard to Water street, Georgetown. Have you them with you?

The witness. "I have the record of the action of the board, copied from the files that pertain to the case.

Mr. Aldrich. "I want the records of the Commissioners, to see what Commissioners were present.

The witness. "There seems to have been no formal record kept of the action of the Commissioners on that occasion.

Mr. Aldrich. "Be kind enough, when you next appear before the committee, to bring up the records, so that we may see who were present at the meeting of October 10, 1879.

The witness. "There does not appear to be any record of any special meeting on that occasion.

Mr. Aldrich. "I want the original records.

The witness. "I can send for them now."

(The original records were sent for.)

By Mr. Aldrich:

Q. "As I understand you, the Commissioners keep no regular record in a book of their proceedings?

A. "Not all of the proceedings. They keep a record of the orders made. For instance, there is in the paper which I have just handed to you an order which was made in the case.

Q. "Do not the record books show who were present at the meeting when that order was made?

A. "No, sir."

* * * *

(The book of records having been procured from the Commissioners' office, Mr. Aldrich asked the witness to refer to the record of October 9, 1879, and to read it from the book.)

The witness read, as follows:

"'Present, Commissioners Dent, Twining and the President. The board met at the usual hour. Ordered, that the assessment for the improvement of Water street, in Georgetown, under an extension of contract No. 765, with

George Neitzey, be reduced to the cost of relaying the former cobble-stone pavement and grading.—Oct. 10, '79."

Mr. Aldrich. "Does that refresh your recollection as to the fact whether you were present or not?

The witness. "This is a record that I was present in the office that day, but it does not contradict what I have said, that I had nothing to do with the proceedings of the board on that occasion.

Mr. Aldrich. "You said that you were not present.

The witness. "It is impossible for me to say whether I was or not. * * * I positively declined to have anything to do with it.

Mr. Henkle. "You mean that you did not vote on the question?

The witness. "I had nothing at all to do with the proceeding. I was not consulted, and took no part in it. I may have been in the room, and I suppose that that is what the record means."

What a figure for the chief magistrate of a great city! He first denies being present; then produces a partial record to throw the committee off the track, and when driven to a corner sends for the original book, which shows that he was present when the order was passed relieving his family's property from taxation.

Then he undertakes to excuse himself by saying that "he was not consulted" in the matter. But he had just told the committee that he had "declined to be present." How could he have declined to be present if he had not been consulted about it?

Comment is wasted on such a wretched performance as this.

IV.

Personal Matters.

It is not agreeable to me to dwell on the use by the Commissioners of their official power for selfish personal purposes, and it is not important to the public interests that I should. I will not mention, therefore, the petty instances of this kind named by rumor; and on behalf of Mr. Morgan, I concede that his offenses in this respect are mostly those of a vain and extremely obliging disposition, having reached his office without, apparently, any well-defined, selfish object, except the salary and the conspicuous position. Mr. Dent, however, had his little plans; such as the reduction of the special assessment on the Linthicum estate, the

improvement of a street leading to his residence, the putting a relative in office, and the acquittal, at the expense of the District, of his obligation to one of the sureties on his official bond.

We have seen how he managed to reduce the special assessment on Water street, Georgetown, by seven-eighths; and what trouble that act got him into with the congressional committee.

Scarcely had Mr. Dent got warm in his official seat when an expenditure of more than $22,000 was ordered for the improvement of a street directly on the line of travel between his residence and that of another member of the board. The expenditure was illegal, neither estimate nor appropriation having been made for the improvement.* This was publicly charged at the time; and, as Mr. Dent goes readily to the papers and did not contradict, it must be assumed to be true.

October 29, 1878, W. C. Dent, a relative, was appointed to a position in the special assessment office; but the newspapers are formidable and Mr. Dent timid, so the "feeler" was quietly withdrawn.

In the only other case of this kind, which I cannot pass without mention, Mr. Dent has explained and re-explained in the newspapers, without lessening the severity of the public disapprobation. I refer to what is known as "The Old Brewery Case." The leading facts are: The late Mr. Riggs, banker, had owned for many years a dilapidated building near Tiber creek; he had never been able to rent it or use it; it was a veritable old rookery. Mr. Riggs became one of Mr. Dent's sureties. Soon thereafter the old building was "fixed up" and leased to the District as a schoolhouse, at the enormous rent annually of $3,000, with an option to the District of purchase at some forty or fifty thousand dollars! Mr. Dent has pleaded that some other Commissioner acted; that he personally did not join in making the orders; that a school trustee recommended; that the school board accepted; and so forth and so on for quantity. But public opinion is inexorable, and holds Mr. Dent guilty of more than a gross indelicacy, which he impliedly con-

*The Comptroller of the Treasury in his current report calls attention to this illegality and suggests that Congress must legislate before these unlawful accounts of the Commissioners can be settled.

fesses. I challenge him now, if he wishes to test public opinion, to push the scheme for buying at the option. We will have the best real estate dealers before the congressional committee to testify to the value of the real estate; and all the ex-school trustees to testify as to its value for school purposes. The conclusion to which the committee will come is that the "Old Brewery," with its single staircase, cannot be used permanently as a school building; that the site is not desirable, and that fifteen hundred dollars is all that should be paid for a school-house site at that point.*

V.

THE CLIQUE.

I now turn with pleasure to matters of graver importance. My chief cause of complaint against the Commissioners is that they are the pliant agents of a clique of bankers and railroad and horse-car companies, acting together for the advancement of their interests and the protection of the last named from suit for arrears of taxes due the District. If these banded interests which now govern this District are to be continued in power, they will generally govern through weak men—men of the same character as Mr. Dent and Mr. Morgan—men without power of initiative, and willing to take orders from their masters so long as they are left to fatten on their salaries and indulge their vanity in wearing scarfs on gala days, and issuing proclamations after the Presidential style. It is possible, however, if Messrs. Dent and Morgan should be removed on personal grounds, that we might get in exchange one of our real rulers, associated,

*In a former chapter I referred to the leasing for school purposes, by the Commissioners, of the old brewery in the northeast part of the city, and supposed at the time it was the property of the late Mr. Riggs. I have since learned that it belonged to the bank, of which, however, he was principal owner. I also stated that the owners of the brewery had never been able to rent or use it. I learn they once succeeded in finding a purchaser; but when he came to view the property he "jumped the town," and has not been heard of since. My attention was drawn to this case because a former school board had examined into the fitness of the building for school uses, and reported against it. The sudden change of front on this subject attracted considerable comment at the time, and, because of the confidential relations understood to exist between the Commissioner and his bondsman, the name of the deceasd banker was frequently mentioned. But I have never heard any one reflect on the personal integrity of Mr. Riggs, nor did I intend to do so. I was characterizing the act of the other man.

perhaps, with a weak colleague. We might, for instance, get a bank president, or a street-railroad company president or vice-president, of brains and energy, who would condescend to leave his own money making long enough to get the District law shaped so as to further the interests of himself and his co-adjutors. He would dine and wine congressmen, take them out driving behind his high steppers, and convince them that men who have ample property, through keenness and unscrupulousness, are the best administrators of public affairs; that the man who has always exhibited the selfishness of a bird of prey is certain to be transformed, by appointment to a commissionership, into a philanthropist devoted to the good of his fellow-citizens! It is astonishing how readily some congressmen, under the logical influences of good dinners and pleasant drives, believe in such metamorphoses, which, to citizens generally, are as miraculous as any chanted by Ovid.

I want no such change. If we can't change the real rulers, let us keep Messrs. Dent and Morgan. If they don't help us much, they can't help their masters much, except by prevention of proper legislation. Their loins are not so thick as the little finger of their would-be successor. Their whips are more endurable than the scorpions we might have to suffer. My quarrel is not with Messrs. Dent and Morgan, or either of them, personally, but with the clique whose work they are content to do—a clique few in number and thoroughly selfish, unfit to administer the law in a community of freemen, governing by secret influences, not possessing the confidence of their fellow-citizens, and without sympathy with the administration of the national Government.

The local government of this District should be placed in the hands of men of experience in municipal affairs, knowledge of business, identified with the large majority of citizens who in the last twenty years have built up the national capital—men whose views are not those formed under treasonable influences; men who are not dragged along behind the car of progress; men who are abreast with the times; men who are not secretly hostile to the national administration. Am I extravagant in claiming that President Arthur can find quite as much municipal knowledge and adminis-

trative ability in the 102,000 people added to this District since 1860 as in the small clique belonging to the remainder, but not representing them, from which President Hayes selected our local rulers?

I shall endeavor to demonstrate to the incredulous, if such there be, that the clique referred to has governed this District for some years past, and to point out what it has done and what it intends to do.

The Old Corporation.*

From 1802 to 1871 Washington had a municipal government, constructed on the common model of Southern villages. It was legislated for on the pure state-rights theory. It was not recognized as the capital of a nation. Until 1861, it was regarded by our secession rulers as soldiers regard barracks—as a temporary shelter for the headquarters of confederated States, liable to be abandoned at any moment. Valuable improvements for Federal purposes were begrudged. The streets were generally unpaved; horses and carriages were stalled in the Avenue, and Calhoun and Hayne picked their way carefully through the mud to the Capitol, striding from one to another of the loose stones placed across the miry streets by their body slaves. The best avenues and streets were dimly lighted at night, here and there, with oil lamps, and the others lay in total darkness. Crimes of violence abounded; the significant names of "Hell's Bottom," "Murder Bay," applied to large localities of the city, are historical monuments of the barbarism of *ante bellum* days.

The public schools were intended for paupers. In the Southern idea, no gentleman could send his son or daughter to a public school; an idea which survives in great strength in our own day, and accounts for the large number of private schools, especially for girls, in Washington.

The city government drew feebly its little breath of life. It was always impoverished, generally bankrupt, and incessantly clamoring to Congress for relief and aid. The rich men would not pay taxes, but cunningly shifted the heaviest burdens from themselves and forced them on the shoulders

*The remainder of this chapter first appeared in the *Sunday Gazette* over the letters "E. C."

of the poor. Speculators who owned many city lots must have dictated the ordinance which made, in effect, their previous assent necessary to any street improvement; they were thus exempted from assessments for sidewalks and carriageways. But the whole cost of these were taxed to the honest citizen, who asked for improvements, because he wanted a good street opposite his residence. Thus, the poor man owning a dwelling might pay more for street improvements than the speculating owner of city lots worth a million.

Licenses were required of men wishing to follow industrial occupations; and this tax, also, did not fall on the bankers and speculators.

A revenue was drawn from licensing slave pens and auction blocks on which human beings were exposed for sale. Washington became the great slave market for Maryland and Virginia; husbands were torn from their wives and mothers from their children and sold on the chief streets of Washington to the highest bidder, while ladies and school children looked on to learn humanity and citizens speculated in human flesh to make money. There was a slave pen on Seventh street, beyond the arsenal; a second, on Pennsylvania avenue, just below Seventh; a third, on Seventh street, opposite the Center Market; and a fourth, on Pennsylvania avenue, just east of Lafayette Park, and within a stone's throw of the White House. The President, no doubt, often heard the strident voice of the auctioneer of human cattle; and he could see the chained gangs of wretched captives as they were driven in open day to the wharves, for the South and a market. Washington capital was invested in this horrid commerce; and of many a fine residence in the city, every brick is cemented in human blood.

It was reputable then to trade in slaves. A colored man was presumed to be a slave; it was reputable to arrest him, imprison him, and, if no white man claimed him, to sell him for jail fees!

It was disreputable to speak against this infamy! dangerous even! Twenty years ago these horrors existed; the shackles have hardly rusted; the auction blocks have not rotted; the speculators in God's image still live! not only live, but they ask for honors and municipal power!

Rebellion Times.

The rebellion caused the deposal of the old dynasty, social and political. Some of its members fled to the South; some to foreign lands; others stayed to haggle with the Government for the price of their slaves; but the city remained full of rebel sympathizers, who played the spy during the rebellion and have played the hypocrite ever since. With the influx of a new population new ideas began to flourish. New men came to the front. The public schools for white children rose in honor; they emerged from the "pauper" condition; and, for the first time, schools were established for colored children. These were no longer put up for sale. The nation had laid its heavy hand on slavery and crushed it. The period was one of transition, not of construction and organization.

From 1865 to 1871.

During these six years the crystallization of the new elements of society was going on. The population increased rapidly. There was general progress, but the old dynasties began, also, to reorganize with a view to regain power. Meanwhile they became the opposition party in municipal politics.

From 1871 to 1874.

The territorial District government, organized in February, 1871, was the first formulated demonstration of the New Washington. It was, perhaps, premature; certainly incomplete and novel. There were no precedents for its methods; every part of its organic law needed construction; the right of suffrage was ill-guarded; and the new government, from its inauguration, was forced to struggle for life against the social, political and money power of the *ante bellum* dynasty and its recent allies. The leaders of the reaction represented large wealth. Being bent on selfish gain, they were all things to all men. Taught by reverses, they had no "views." Whatever they were in private and with each other, they simulated liberality of opinion; the Republican party, being in power, these ex-slaveholders rejoiced that slavery was abolished; these dyed-in-the-wool Democrats denounced secession, and kept secret their contributions to

Democratic funds; they frequented men in high office, cultivated congressmen and tendered money accommodations to the President. In paying honor to Republican Presidents, they elbowed out Republicans themselves. President Grant, however, knew a cat when he saw one, spite of any covering of meal! And he knew the clique.

Alexander R. Shepherd was the representative of the popular cause. A man of the people, his qualities were those of a great tribune. He wished to build up a national capital, not to be removed through enduring ages. To do this, he taxed the bankers, the real estate speculators; he made them feel, for the first time, the weight of burdens they had always put on the poor. And they hated him.

Under his sympathetic favor the public schools maintained their forward movement; and these ex-slaveholders hated him for that. Enterprise and commerce began to grow; men of intelligence began to migrate to Washington; the waste places of the city were covered with houses, and the eyes of the whole people were turned with interest and pride to what had been a straggling Southern village.

It is a great pity the Governor's energy was not toned down by administrative experience and legal knowledge. His vigilant enemies profited by his mistakes; they put their arrows into every open joint of his harness. But, whatever may have been his faults, he was nobler than the clique that brought him down. He was—

> "The eagle towering in his pride of place,
> And, by a mousing owl, hawked at and killed."

From 1874 to 1877.

For about three years there was an *ad interim* District government, devoted chiefly to finishing improvements, getting business into regular order and restoring the finances. It was conducted by Commissioners who were not residents of the District. These gentlemen were hardly in their seats before they were summoned to surrender to the clique which had overthrown Shepherd. It would seem that these strangers did not appreciate fully the power that lay back of the summons. Their eyes were opened, on the advent of Mr. Hayes, when the old secessionist, slaveholding, anti-public

school dynasty presented itself as a banking, railroad and whiskey-sellers' league, with a howling train of Democrats and delinquent tax-debtors. As a Republican, Unionist, Anti-Monopolist and Temperance man, President Hayes felt it to be his duty, in the interest of harmony and conciliation, to sacrifice his own party and principles, and personal friend, Governor Dennison. It was thus that the District government was handed over to the puppets of a secret band of Democrats, ex-slaveholders, secessionists, speculators in District funds, delinquent railroad corporations and knights of of the spigot and funnel.

From 1877 to 1881.

Since this unfortunate capitulation of President Hayes, the methods, principles, and men of *ante bellum* times have been in power. The ostensible seat of the District government is at Columbia Building, on Four-and-a-Half street; the real seat is nearer the corner of Fifteenth street and Pennsylvania avenue.

Let us stop and study the list of removals and appointments of District officers made by the clique, through the grace of a so-called Republican President, immediately after its advent to power. Bear in mind that the Old Washington, of *ante beltum* days, including the county, contained 75,080 inhabitants, while the New Washington of to-day contains 177,624 inhabitants; that is, there have been added to the District during and since the war more than 102,000 new citizens as against the 75,000 old citizens who resided here before.

You may do well to keep in mind also the familiar expression, "He is an old citizen." It is much in vogue and very persuasive at Columbia Building; it means that the party to whom it is applied is worthy to hold office. It means more—it means that citizens not born in Maryland, Virginia or the District of Columbia, are not worthy to hold office, or not *so* worthy as those who happen to have that good fortune.

In the light of this fact and the history of the governing clique, already sketched, it is easy to formulate the rules which control removals from and appointments to office under the present District government. They are: First,

"Old Citizenship;" and, second, "Democracy;" that is, the applicant, in order to obtain office, must be an old citizen, born in Maryland, Virginia or the District of Columbia, and he must be a Democrat. And the same rules apply and the same qualifications are necessary in order to be retained in office.

Of course there are exceptions to these rules, as there are to all rules. Rich people and bankers are excepted, as are trimmers, who

> " * * crook the pregnant hinges of the knee,
> Where thrift may follow fawning."

Turn first to the record of removals and appointments of school trustees for the white schools of Washington, Georgetown, and Uniontown.

Colonel George W. Dyer, a new citizen and Republican, was superseded by Mr. B. G. Lovejoy, and old citizen and Democrat.

Dr. Robert Reyburn, a new citizen and Republican, was replaced by Dr. George C. Samson, an old citizen and Democrat.

General Wm. Henry Browne, a new citizen and Republican, was superseded by Mr. T. A. Lambert, an old citizen and Democrat.

Mr. Edward Baldwin, an old citizen but a Republican, was superseded by Mr. Edward Temple, a banker and Democrat.

General Charles E. Hovey, a new citizen and Republican, was superseded by Mr. Madison Davis, an old citizen of unknown politics.

Mr. Edmund F. French, a new citizen and Republican, was superseded by Mr. D. W. Middleton, an old citizen and Democrat.

Mr. C. B. Smith, a new citizen and Republican, was superseded by Dr. Arthur Christie, an Englishman, not naturalized at the time of appointment, but a rich man and secessionist. This brought him into fellowship with the clique, and he was appointed.

Mr. Benj. F. Lloyd, an old citizen and Democrat, fully met the requirements of both rules, and was continued in office.

Mr. George White, an old citizen but a Republican, was superseded by Mr. Joseph L. Pearson, an old citizen and Democrat.

Dr. Charles H. Cragin, a new citizen and Republican, was superseded by Mr. C. M. Matthews, an old citizen and Democrat.

Mr. W. W. Curtis, a new citizen, Republican and "trimmer," succeeded in holding on to his place by flattering his neighbor and townsman, Mr. Commissioner Dent.

I will place these names side by side. On the one side are the men of the new Washington, appointed by Governor Dennison and his colleagues; on the other are the men of the old Washington, appointed by Mr. Dent and his colleagues:

Gov. Dennison's School Board.	*Mr. Dent's School Board.*
Dr. Chas. H. Cragin, Rep.	Chas. M. Mathews, Dem.
W. W. Curtis, Rep.	W. W. Curtis, Trim.
Col. Geo. W. Dyer, Rep.	Ben. G. Lovejoy, Dem.
Dr. Robert Reyburn, Rep.	Dr. Geo. C. Samson, Dem.
Gen. Wm. H. Browne, Rep.	T. A. Lambert, Dem.
Edward Baldwin, Rep.	Edward Temple, Dem.
Gen. Chas. E. Hovey, Rep.	Madison Davis, ——.
Edmund F. French, Rep.	D. W. Middleton, Dem.
Benjamin F. Lloyd, Dem.	Benj. F. Lloyd, Dem.
George White, Rep.	Joseph L. Pearson, Dem.
C. B. Smith, Rep.	Dr. Arthur Christie, Dem.

The foregoing list includes only the white members of the school board appointed for Washington and its two suburbs, Georgetown and Uniontown. Members appointed for the colored schools and for the county are not included.

In the Fire Board a vigorous fight was carried on for many months against Mr. William B. Reed, a Republican, though an old citizen, but when he died the board was again brought under the operation of the two rules and made solid—all old citizens—all Democrats.

The treasurer, Mr. Robert P. Dodge; the water registrar, Mr. Thomas C. Cox; the inspector of buildings, Mr. Thomas B. Entwisle; and the health officer, Dr. Smith Townshend, are further illustrations of the practical application by the Commissioners of their two rules. The collector Mr. John F. Cook, was able to meet the requirement of the first rule, and the shade of his genial face enabled him to hedge

against the second. The Auditor, Mr. John T. Vinson, is an "old citizen," but how he escaped decapitation under the second rule is more than I know.

In short, any man not an old citizen and a Democrat, has no standing at District headquarters under Messrs. Dent and Morgan and the clique who control them.

VI.

THE CLIQUE AND MAJOR MORGAN.

I have referred to the real rulers of this District as a clique. It is not meant by this that they have written articles of co-partnership, meet in midnight conclaves, have grips and signs, and keep a roll of members; or that each member has bound himself specially to promote the designs of every other. It is certain that each one in his heart disapproves the special object of each of the others; no one favors the entire tax exemption of all credits, except the heavy capitalist; the assessment exemption of all street railroads, except the horse-car companies; the non-collection of tax arrears on real estate, except the delinquents; the release of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company from more than sixty thousand dollars' indebtedness to the District, except that corporation; or opening a grog-shop on every city square, except the Liquor Dealers' Protective Association. But the instinct of a common purpose—plundering the public—unites them in a clique for a common object, the control of the local government. Each wolf intends to fill his own maw; but wolves will join in a pack to run down a deer. During the chase they obey the strongest and the fiercest; and they do not quarrel over the carcass if there is enough to feed all. So the members of the clique, with the quick intuition of selfishness, recognize their leader and obey him; and they divide the spoils in silence.

Three Years, and $50,000.

What I call the "clique" dictated the important features of the law of June, 1878, for the permanent government of the District; and among other ingenious contrivances, the

provisions that the Civil Commissioners shall have resided in the District three years before appointment, and shall not, in that time, have claimed residence anywhere else; and that each of them shall give an official bond in $50,000. These tend to exclude the new population. Men removing to Washington do not renounce formally their citizenship elsewhere, and few Republicans own real estate enough to warrant them in giving a bond of that amount. As the bond has never been, and probably never will be, sued on, its only object seems to be the exclusion of the class which includes nearly all the Republicans. The practical result is to prevent the candidacy of many competent men, and compel every appointee to fall upon his knees to the clique, in consideration of the signatures on his bond.

The Contrivance of a Bond.

A striking illustration of the operation of this contrivance is the case of a Commissioner who was appointed as a Republican and Temperance man, and who, to get sureties on his bond, sold himself, official soul and body. I refer to

Thomas P. Morgan,

a pledged Republican.

I am not altogether clear that the police major was a Republican before he became a candidate. He probably belonged to that large and conservative class in this District who belong to no party out of power, and contribute to none; who have no political views; who can change so as to suit any administration the people may choose to elect, but who always treat the "outs" as if they may some day be "ins," as Chesterfield wanted the preacher to speak of the devil—"politely, for we know not into whose hands we may fall." It is pretty certain that the police major, when a candidate, proved that he was a good enough Republican to suit Mr. Hayes, who was probably not severe in his requirements in this particular, and pledged himself to conduct the District government on "Republican principles;" which is not, perhaps, as definite as it might have been. It appears that, in view of this pledge, a gentleman who was high in the councils of the Republican party withdrew all opposition to Major Morgan's appointment, and I have no doubt the

Major intended at the time to keep what was, for him, a pledge of honor rather than of conviction.

A Temperance Man.

Whatever doubt there may exist as to the Republicanism of Major Morgan before he was a candidate, there is none as to his temperance principles. Personally, he had abstained for many years from intoxicating liquors. He made total abstinence a part of his religion. He was understood to hold extreme views about the sinfulness of drinking alcoholic beverages. In his Sunday-school he lectured the children on the subject. His zeal had led him to identify himself publicly with the cause; as a police major he had opposed granting certain licenses; he had attended temperance meetings and spoken at them. I do not know that he belonged to the Rechabites, or the Jonadabs, or the Dashaways; but it is not improbable. At any rate, he possessed their entire confidence, sympathy and support. The ladies of the Women's Christian Temperance Union esteemed him highly as a reliable temperance man, and they did not fail to impress their confidence in him upon Mrs. Hayes, the accomplished lady who managed the White House so gracefully, and who took so deep an interest in temperance reform. It is certain that the whole moral, social and political power of the temperance people of the District, and the power is very great, was used to secure the appointment of Major Morgan as Commissioner. It is about as certain as anything of the kind can be, that he was appointed because of the request of the temperance people. President Hayes took a lazy interest in the temperance question, and was willing to oblige the temperance ladies.

That Official Bond.

Having clutched his appointment, the Major looked around for sureties on his official bond. And now his troubles began. No temperance man had any special interest worth $50,000 in the management of the District government, and no one saw why he should risk ruin for himself and family to oblige the Major. The Republicans thought the Major a little off color and hesitated; but they would probably have provided him with a bond if the Major had

not become frightened and sold himself to the clique. Of the leading sureties on his bond, three (Messrs. E. E. White, Hume and Barbour,) were furnished from among the wealthy members of the "Liquor Dealers' Protective Association," and one was the political representative of the banking and money interests, (Mr. John A. Baker.) There were, of course, no articles of agreement signed and sealed; the bargain was an understood thing, like all political bargains. If Morgan had been asked a week before whether he would have made it, he would have answered, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?"

What the Temperance People Expected Commissioner Morgan to do.

Fortunately we are able to tell with precision what this was. I have now before me the pamphlet containing the address and resolutions of the "Pastors' Union," which led the temperance movement. They say on the sixth page:

"From the beginning of the movement down to the present moment, the Pastors' Union has sought only the faithful execution of the law which the Commissioners have sworn to uphold and execute."

I have entire confidence in the calm statement of these men. They are intelligent, conscientious and without motive to mislead. They had a right to ask the faithful execution of the law, and they asked no more. It was the duty of the Commissioners to do this without being asked; to require with every application for license the written assent of the majority of the owners of real estate and householders on the same side of the square, and also on the nearest side of the opposite square, and to prosecute all persons selling liquor without license.

They looked to Commissioner Morgan to enforce the law.

What Commissioner Morgan Did.

The first thing he did was to ask and obtain of his colleagues the immediate and practical control of the police system and liquor license system. The temperance men were rejoiced, because they had confidence that the law would be enforced; the "Liquor Dealers' Protective Association" were delighted, because they knew the law would be disregarded.

Commissioner Morgan's predecessors had appointed a license board whose construction of the law had been extremely loose and always in favor of applicants. Its practice had been still worse. Not only had licenses been granted without consent of the real estate owners and resident householders in the vicinity, but, in many cases, on forged signatures. Six hundred licenses had been issued in 1879. Grogshops sprung up near dwelling-houses, near school-houses, near churches. They were as thick as autumn leaves; drunkenness was made easy; drugged whiskey was as plenty as dirt; the business was frightfully overdone.

Against this state of things the Pastors' Union felt called upon to act. They petitioned, September 20, 1880, for the appointment of a new board, and that applications for license should be made a matter of public record.

The first request was refused, the Commissioners stating that "after the most thorough scrutiny" they felt satisfied that the license board had discharged its duties "intelligently, impartially, faithfully and in conformity to law."

The second request was granted.*

The license board, thus endorsed, proceeded to recommend, and Commissioner Morgan and colleagues to grant, licenses about as formerly. The Pastors' Union says, page 3:

"The license board has worked diligently and given applicants every facility in its power to obtain their licenses; in many instances acting as attorney for them, returning defective applications for amendment, or because of lack of proper signers," etc.

Licenses were granted without the consent required by law, and the Commissioners refused to prosecute men selling without license. The Pastors' Union calls attention to the fact that the proprietors of one hundred or more saloons "continued selling without license, and the Commissioners, knowing that these men were violators both of the law and their own rules, nevertheless licensed them." They add:

"When such parties were arrested because selling without license, and were fined by Judge Snell, they were promptly pardoned by the Commissioners, thus, in the language of Judge Snell, 'paralyzing the law.'"†

*I called last week at the Columbia Building and demanded to see this pretended "public record" without being able to do so. It appears to be kept under the vigilant guardianship of Commissioner Morgan, who was absent.

†"The District Commissioners have pardoned Michael J. Kane, convicted last Saturday of selling liquor without license."—*Post*, *Oct.* 25, 1881. The "paralyzing" still goes on.

After reviewing the action of the Commissioners in this matter, the Pastors' Union adopted a preamble and resolutions, beginning:

"Whereas, the Commissioners of the District of Columbia have failed to enforce the liquor law, and have manifested their sympathy with a traffic which is a fruitful source of disorder, vice and crime;"

And they recommend their removal.

In all this disgraceful business Commissioner Morgan was the chief actor. Sorely beset by the temperance people on the one hand, and by the Liquor Dealers' Association on the other, he gave the former "taffy" and the latter licenses. Some of the former might have been swallowed if the Major had not descended to canvass for signatures to an application

For a Grog-Shop License.

I have now to state a fact about the temperance Commissioner which is, at first blush, incredible; but I will not go beyond what can be proved.

The keeper of what is known as the "Billy Wright saloon," on F street, opposite the Masonic Temple, wanted last fall to get a new license. To comply with the law, the written consent of the board of trustees of the Masonic Temple was necessary; but the board unanimously refused. It was supposed by some one, or suggested, (was it by the Commissioner?) that if some of the trustees would sign their consent individually and unofficially, that that might do. Of course such signatures were worthless, not being those of property owners. A creditor of the saloon keeper was called in—Mr. Frank Hume. He applied to Mr. Isaac L. Johnson, a trustee, who refused to sign the consent paper. Mr. Hume appears to have gone then to Commissioner Morgan, who gave him the following letter:

"OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONERS,
"DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,
"WASHINGTON——— —, 188-.

"*I. L. Johnson, Esq.:*

"*Dear Sir:* I would be pleased if you will comply with the request of my friend, Frank Hume. Very truly,

"THOS. P. MORGAN."

On receipt of this letter, not dated and written in the

blind style of the Delphic oracle, Mr. Johnson took the "permission paper" for a liquor license, handed to him by Mr. Hume, and signed it in the following manner: "I. L. Johnson, signed at the request of Thos. P. Morgan."

It was not long before a messenger, breathless with haste, came with a message from Commissioner Morgan that such a signature would never do, and requesting Mr. Johnson to remove the words "signed at the request of Thos. P. Morgan." Mr. Johnson thereupon took the paper from the messenger and drew his pen through the obnoxious words, leaving them, however, quite legible. I understand that after the paper got back again into Commissioner Morgan's hands the words were entirely blotted out. It goes without saying that Commissioner Morgan granted the "Billy Wright saloon" license, although he well knew that Mr. Johnson was no more the owner of the Masonic Temple than I am.

The temperance Commissioner appears to have been extremely anxious to cover his track in this disgraceful affair. He made several attempts to regain possession of his "blind" letter to Mr. Johnson. One of the persons who tried to persuade Mr. J. to give it up was Major Brock, the Superintendent of Police. He was probably the agent and friend of the Commissioner in the matter. But Mr. Johnson declined; and he still holds the wonderful autograph. This has been seen and examined by many of the temperance people in the District, former friends of Commissioner Morgan; they all shake their heads over it. The Rechabites, Jonadabs, Dashaways, Sons of Temperance, Pastors' Union and Women's Christian Temperance Union, all regard it as "unfortunate." I shouldn't wonder if the Methodist church should inquire into the moral character of it. Mr. Johnson ought to frame it and donate it to the liquor license board, to be hung up in their room as a perpetual warning to weak Commissioners.

And here I leave the subject. I have mentioned it to show that when the clique buys a Commissioner they buy his soul. When they degrade him they drag him in the dirt.

VII.

FAVORITISM TO RAILROAD COMPANIES.

I have set up no claim to originality in the charges I have made against the Commissioners. What I have written has been said many times by others, and very often much more sharply. I follow a track beaten by representatives, senators, congressional committees, citizens and writers for the press. Having decided to devote this article to illustrating the influence of the right wing of the governing power of this District, the railroad corporations, I felt that I might expose myself to the charge, by the interested parties, of appealing to popular prejudice. I disclaim any intention of doing so. I appreciate these great motors of civilization and convenience for street travel, and I aid them in every legitimate way. But the men who obtain from the public the right to manage them in the interest of the public as well as their own, must observe the conditions of the grants, must not take more than belongs to them, must not seize all the profits and shirk all the burdens. My general view on this subject is shared by that very conservative paper, *The Evening Star*, which in a late number publishes the following editorial:

"As things go, it is, perhaps, not surprising that our street railway companies should refuse to pay their taxes, decline to remove the dust and filth they deposit in the street, and disregard generally the rights and comfort of the public. That is the way of corporate monopolies all the world over, and people do not wonder at it. But that our well-paid District authorities should sit idly down and permit these impositions to be practiced day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year, is, indeed, amazing. One would suppose that self-respect and pride of position would induce a little energy on the part of these officials; or, if that were not incentive enough, that fear of losing their place, and the fat salary and personal consideration which go with it, would spur them to action occasionally. Nothing, however, seems to be powerful enough to stir them from the strange lethargy that holds them in its paralyzing embrace. Has the first-named consideration no weight with these gentlemen? Do they feel so strongly entrenched in their snug position that there is no danger of the second contingency taking place?"

I do not propose to go beyond the sentiment of the above article, but to give a few examples, by way of illustration, of the high and mighty way in which the railway grandees

drive their fine steppers and elegant carriages over the rights of the people of this District; and the low and humble way in which our District Commissioners either prevent popular resistance or help the grandees in their evasion of taxation or assessment. I will begin with

The Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Company.

This corporation occupies a valuable public reservation in the heart of the city without paying a cent of rent. It has also secured the right to run its tracks through more than two miles in length of the best streets of South Washington. For this it pays nothing. It might be supposed that the company, because of two privileges so valnable, would take particular and incessant care not to encroach on the reserved rights of the people, not to go beyond the strict letter of the grant. But what is the truth? It has seized on the streets and avenues as its corporate property; turned a continuous half-mile of street into a freight depot, and an avenue into a cattle depot; driven its cars at high rates of speed through a populous city; crushed and mangled several children; made night hideous and sleep impossible by the shrill scream of steam-whistles; men have abandoned their dwellings, driven away by the intolerable nuisance; churches have discontinued their meetings; the courts have been full of suits for damages to property, and the impoverished people of South Washington have for years needed only a leader to tear up the tracks and make a bonfire of the cars. Again and again have they held meetings and appointed committees to ask the Commissioners for enforcement of the law and protection for their property. But these delegations are made to feel that they are disturbers of the official quiet. The Commissioners will never enforce what law there is, nor ask for any enactment to save South Washington. So long as the present clique shall govern, the dog that follows the president of the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Company will be more honored at Columbia Building than a delegation of complaining citizens.

While the Commissioners have found it impossible to go to Congress to get legislation for the protection of the people of South Washington, and are too indifferent to recom-

mend a bill to aid them, they have been prompt and energetic in aiding a scheme of plunder of the District treasury by the

Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company.

The main facts in the matter are as follows: For many years the railroad company had refused to pay its taxes. The amount standing on the assessor's books, with interest and penalties, up to July 1, 1879, was - - $136,826.12
The Commissioners, about March, 1880, compromised for - - - - - - 75,000.00

Thus making a present to the company of - 61,826.12

This is a short statement of the transaction. All the facts are fully set out in the *Congressional Record* for January 27, 1881. They do not make the case any better for the Commissioners. It appears that the taxes were in litigation. The District had won the case below, and it was in the United States Supreme Court, on appeal by the company. It might be tried at the term of 1879–'80, or it might go over to the term of 1880–'81. The attorney for the District was quite confident of success. He says in a letter to the Commissioners: "The risk to the District of being beaten by the judgment of the Supreme Court has, in my opinion, no appreciable value."

It was finally compromised January 27, 1881, a few days, perhaps a week or two, before the United States Supreme Court would have adjudged the whole amount to the District. As the chief cause for non-payment was the alleged excessive assessments, and the company had not appealed from them in time, any lawyer can see that the District would have won the case. It was indecent not to wait.

Of course the Commissioners left the whole thing to Congress; but why did they bring it before Congress? Why did they work for it from March 25, 1880, to January 27, 1881?

Messrs. Edmunds, Windom, Teller and Platt were among those who voted against this "steal," and thirty-one senators were absent.

Senator Edmunds made a speech against it. I extract a few passages:

"Now, it seems that the company, on one reason or another, chose not to pay its taxes, and it is proposed that we shall give the company the difference between $75,000 and ninety odd thousand dollars of actual assessed taxation, saying nothing about penalties and interest, simply because the Commissioners report that if the company had attended to its interests during this litigation, and had caused the assessment that was made from year to year to be reviewed by some proper authority, if there were any, the Commissioners now think that the assessments might have been somewhat reduced."

Referring to the question before the Supreme Court, he said:

"Let that question be decided. If it turns out that the only persons who are entitled to escape from taxation in this District are the artificial ones that exist in it, or come into it, then we shall know that it is our duty to consider what step can be taken next."

In regard to the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company, Mr. Edmunds said:

"If they have legal rights, let them make them out; if they have no legal rights, and are bound, like other people, to pay taxes, let them pay them to the end." * * *

"Therefore, it is perfectly manifest that the Commissioners of the District of Columbia have no more power to rebate this $55,000 of what this company will have to pay if they are beaten in this lawsuit, than I have individually; and if you pass this bill to make this settlement, what are you going to do next week when the Metropolitan Railroad Company, with its $178,000 (if that be the amount) of unpaid assessments, and regular taxation, too, perhaps, comes forward and says," &c., &c. * * *

"Then there is to be another compromise with, say the Washington and Georgetown Railroad Company, which, I believe, is not so deeply in," &c., &c. * * *

Mr. Edmunds closes with these words:

"But when it comes to invoking the legislative power to go into a contract settlement with a great corporation, by which it throws off about one-third of the whole amount of taxes, that, if we are entitled to have any at all, are due and payable, it appears to me it is a case which has no parallel and no precedent that I know of."

In spite of this scathing exposure by Senator Edmunds, the measure was carried by the friends of the railroad company. That such a thing is possible is a warning not to put into office as Commissioners men who can be led by the nose by any railroad corporation. The period for which the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company had leave to run its cars to the present depot has expired; is any one so ignorant as to expect Messrs. Dent and Morgan to enforce an observance of the rights of citizens?

The next in order is

The Metropolitan Street-Car Company.—John W. Thompson, President.

In 1874 it had already become evident that Mr. Thompson did not intend to pay the assessment upon his road if he could help it. His testimony before the investigating committee in that year is interesting. (See vol. 2, pages 870 to 882.) It showed that he did not intend to pay. At the same time the amount of indebtedness to the District of Mr. Thompson's company was large; but in the month of November, 1880, and I think several years before that date, it had swollen to the prodigious sum of $169,553.66; that is, without counting interest. It is a peculiarity of the special assessment law that interest does not run on the assessment, except from the date of the tax-lien certificate issued upon it by the Commissioners. As the Commissioners issued no tax-lien certificate, the railroad company has been saved the interest, which, if it had run from year to year, would now amount to a very large sum—about $80,000. How do the Commissioners explain their neglect in this regard? They issued certificates against the property of many private persons, and the interest in many cases amounted to half as much as the principal. How did Mr. Thompson's company escape? I will not assign motives; I state the bare facts, and everybody may draw his own inference.

From the time Mr. Dent was made Commissioner there was a constantly gathering storm of indignant remonstrance because the Commissioners did not sue for, or enforce in some way, the collection of assessments against the Metropolitan, the Columbia and the Washington and Georgetown Railroad Companies; squibs about it appeared in the city papers; men talked the matter over on the streets; others brought it to the attention of congressional committees on the District, and allusions were made to it on the floor of the House. Other public men were as familiar with it as Mr. Edmunds. The pressure became greater on the Commissioners after their letter of March 25, 1880, asking permission to donate $61,000 to the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company, under pretext of compromise; and it was clear that the matter would be investigated by Congress if

the Commissioners should do nothing. Accordingly, on the 27th of November, 1880, a few days before the meeting of Congress, they began a suit against the Metropolitan Company for $153,216.15, being just $16,337.51 less than their books showed to be due as principal. They had already lost the interest by the non-issue of certificates, as explained above. The suit is No. 22,458, at law; was certified to the general term, March 26, 1881, and will be argued probably this term. It stands on demurrer. If the case shall finally be disposed of in the lower court during the present year, President Thompson can then take it, on appeal, to the United States Supreme Court, where it cannot be reached at the present rate of progress in that court for four years; and all this time the company is paying no interest on this large indebtedness, because the Commissioners have not issued the proper tax-lien certificates. Under the law the interest is ten per cent., and the annual saving to this corporation, by reason of the Commissioners' neglect and failure to issue the proper tax-lien certificates, is $16,955.36; or, during the four years it can yet stave off payment by litigation, the modest little sum of $77,821.44. Add to this the $80,000 in interest heretofore avoided and you begin to see how it is and why it is that such corporations profit by having friends in power.

But they are not satisfied even with the present Commissioners; they prefer Mr. John W. Thompson; and he, while protesting he does not want it, is understood to be anxious to have the honor forced upon him.

"Why, there was a crown offered him; and being offered, he put it by with his hand, thus; and the people fell a shouting * * * Then he offered it to him again; then he put it by again; but, to my thinking, he was loth to lay his fingers off it."

Washington and Georgetown Street Car Company.—Henry Hurt, President.

This company, as Mr. Edmunds remarked, is "not so deep in" as the Metropolitan; still its indebtedness, as shown on the proper books of the District, in November, 1880, amounted to the large sum of $64,105.80. No tax certificate was ever issued for this; and when the Commissioners were compelled to sue, which they did November 27, 1880, they did so for only $20,049.66, being less by over

forty thousand dollars, than the amount shown by the Commissioners' books to be due. This case is also in General Term. An examination of the books of this company will reveal the fact that a large part of the stock is held by prominent members of our governing clique.

The Columbia Street Car Company.—Henry A. Willard, President.

The route of this road is not so good as that of the other two, and the streets and avenues over which it passes have not been disturbed so often; hence the indebtedness to the District is less, being only $11,257.27. But the company has been treated with the same or greater indulgence; no tax-lien certificates have been issued against its property and it has not been sued at all. How the president of the road managed this exemption does not appear, and it makes little or no difference. He is understood to be the favorite "dark horse" of the delinquent street car companies for one of the Commissionerships.

The Belt Line Street Car Company.—Chas. White, President.

This horse-car company has a clean record at the Tax-Office; and, strange to say, it is the only company which has been harassed and obstructed in its business by the Commissioners.

Summary of District Losses.

By Baltimore and Potomac R. R. Co., beyond estimation.	
By Baltimore and Ohio R. R. Co., - - -	$61,826.12
By Metropolitan horse-car Co., - - -	169,553.66
By Washington and Georg'n horse-car Co., -	64,105.80
By Columbia horse-car Co., - - - -	11,257,27
By the Belt Line horse-car Co., - - -	00,000.00
Total, - - - - - - -	$306,742.85

This summary does not include interest on losses by horse-car companies.

Remarks.

Is it not fair to conclude that there has been concert of action on the part of these delinquent corporations, and that there has been systematic favoritism on the part of the District Commissioners? Why should not the tax-lien certificates have been issued? Why should not the two suits have

been brought for the full amount due? Why should not Mr. Willard's Columbia Company have been sued with the others? Why should not these important matters have been mentioned in the last annual report?

There are certain disinterested and public spirited gentlemen among us who profess a lively admiration for the talents of self-made men and a most prudent conservatism. The latter quality leads them to deprecate any change in our present Commissioners; and the former to recommend, in case any change shall be made, that the vacancy shall be filled by either of these eminent architects of their own fortunes, the president of the Metropolitan horse-car company, or the president of the Columbia horse-car company. They could be happy with either, they say. If any one of these enthusiasts were searched, his pockets would be found stuffed with railroad stocks and bonds. If President Arthur is wise, let him refuse to consider the names of either of the above officials, unless the indebtedness of the company with which the candidate is identified shall have first been paid up and a bond given that all future indebtedness of the kind shall be promptly paid. Other tax-payers are in no mood to have the indebtedness of these corporations to the District wiped out in any such way as was the tax against the Linthicum property on the accession of a trustee of that estate to power.

VIII.

The Gaslight Monopoly.

I can barely touch upon the rich vein of the favoritism to the Gaslight Company. Does any one doubt the fact? Let him go over the contracts of the District with that company, and let him study the facts given in the congressional debate of February 2, 1881, (*Record*, No. 38.) It can be shown that the cost of manufacturing gas at Washington is probably less than seventy cents a thousand feet; that the people of Washington, who are compelled by law to pay two dollars and twenty-five cents, less discount for prompt payment, pay twice the price charged in London; that the Commissioners had agreed to and were on the point of signing a contract to pay twenty-eight dollars a year for each of the 4,233 lamp-

posts in the District, when the House committee interfered and compelled a reduction to twenty-five dollars. These facts aroused the indignation of Mr. Klotz, a clear-headed Pennsylvanian, who lives at Mauch-Chunk, in the heart of the coal region, and knows the cost of gas. In the debate referred to Mr. Klotz exclaimed:

"It would seem as if Congress, in legislating for this District, had but two objects in view—to protect the Gas Company, and then to protect all other people in this city who are seeking to carry out private arrangements for the purpose of filling their pockets." (*Record*, No. 28, p. 14.)

Does any one wish to know why the Commissioners favor the Gaslight Company—why no inquiry is made as to the cost of gas, why such a heavy price for it is forced by law on the people of this District? Let him obtain a copy of the *Post* of February 20, 1881, and study the list of stockholders in that monopoly. After reading the names he will need no comment from me.

IX.

Delinquent Taxes.

Grievous injustice has been done to the punctual taxpayers by the remission to certain individuals of arrears of taxes due from them. In one case the arrears of taxes upon an estate confiscated for rebellion were wholly released, a bill having been worked through Congress for the purpose. In another there was not only a release of all arrears, but an exemption from taxation for a certain period.

What possible excuse can be offered for the indulgence from year to year shown by our rulers to delinquent taxpayers? The aggregate of the arrears of this indebtedness to the District was reported, December, 1880, by the Commissioners, to be $1,194,283.06. This was after Congress had passed repeated laws, at the instance of the Commissioners, for the release of penalties and the reduction of interest to six per cent. This large amount was due to the District chiefly by the friends of the clique in power. Not only have the Commissioners for years neglected to demand stringent laws to compel the payment of this large amount, but they have gone to the other extreme. In their last report they had the incredible audacity to ask authority

from Congress to inquire into these unpaid taxes "and to settle them on their merits." If Congress had been weak enough to comply, the million and more due the District would have almost disappeared, no doubt, after the manner of the Linthicum assessment.

X.

Schemes for Taxing Labor and Letting Capital Go Free.

While the ruling class in the District has been unwilling to pay assessments upon their horse-car companies or taxes upon their personal or real estate, they have been extremely active in their attempts to saddle a large portion of District taxation upon the laboring classes and persons practicing some industry for a livelihood. Their attempts to have Congress pass a license occupation tax law have been unremitting for six or seven years past. In the winter of 1875–'76 the draft of such a bill was presented to the House committee of Congress by Messrs. John T. Given, George W. Riggs, John W. Thompson, James L. Barbour, R. T. Merrick and others. Any one who will take the trouble to examine the bill in question will find that it is a most elaborate act in thirty-eight sections, which ought to bear the title: "An act to force the poor people in this District to pay the expenses of the local government." The character of the bill was so apparent that it was easily defeated.

These gentlemen, however, did not desist from their efforts. A volunteer committee, consisting of some twelve or fifteen of their more active young men, Mr. John A. Baker, president, sat in perpetuity for the purpose of digesting and carrying their favorite measure. On the 11th of December, 1879, General Hunton, at the request of this committee, introduced into the House, Bill No. 2792, to regulate taxes and the imposition of licenses in the District. This bill was in ninety-eight sections, and provided for the taxation of every occupation carried on in the District. Before any man could engage in any business mentioned in the law he was obliged to pay a tax ranging from ten to several hundred dollars. If he failed to do this, he was to be arrested, taken to the police court, and sentenced to the workhouse until he paid a fine equal to the license and five dollars more. If he

appealed and judgment was rendered against him, "the court shall sentence him to pay the fine provided for by law, and in default in payment thereof to be confined in the District jail or workhouse for a period of not less than seven (days,) nor more than six months."

Is it credible that the clique which permits the president of a street-car company who refuses to pay his assessment to go entirely free, could think of nothing but arrest, the workhouse and the jail for the punishment of a butcher, a shoemaker, or a cart-driver who had not paid his tax?

A more monstrous bill, if such a thing is possible, is the one presented in the House by the same clique January 26, 1880, through Mr. Townshend. It is Bill No. 3889. Its title is "To create a board of assessment and taxation for the District of Columbia." It empowered the Commissioners to appoint twenty-one real estate owners, who should be a board, with power to assess real estate and impose a tax on trades, occupations and corporations, by license or otherwise. In short, this board was to have entire control of the whole business of taxation in this district. There was no provision for either oath or bond. If this bill had been passed the property and business of every resident of this district would have been at the mercy of an irresponsible board. It had taken about six years for this committee of self-called "representative citizens" to incubate upon this monster. Of course it was killed in the House.

XI.

Politics.

Under the late Administration the Republicans expected little and got nothing in the District government. I think they had a right to expect that Republicans should not be dismissed to make room for Democrats, especially when the former were competent and the latter were not; that it should not be made a point to offset the nine ex-Union officers and privates in the employ of the District with nine rebel army and navy men, including a commodore; or to dismiss Republicans and appoint Democrats until the parties were equally represented in the offices. I have a list of these removals and appointments, with the politics of each

incumbent as nearly designated as is practicable. Eppa Hunton's squad of Virginians, Mr. Dent's squad, including a relative, and Mr. Morgan's squad, including his son, (lately appointed in the fire department,) are credited to the Democrats, perhaps erroneously in some cases. The fire board and the school board are largely of the same party. At some other time I may take up this subject more in detail; it is not necessary for my purpose now.

As we have no voting in the District we ought, perhaps, to have no politics in the District government; but our Commissioners are necessarily brought into frequent intercourse with the President and the Cabinet, and it would seem reasonable that they should be in sympathy with the National Administration, of whatever party that may be. Nor does sharing control and dividing responsibility appear to help the other party much. You, Mr. Editor, are a Democrat. What, pray, could your party gain by having Commissioners chosen from its ranks? What has it gained? You have had Messrs. Dent and Morgan. What good have they done your party? It is true they have dismissed a good many Republican subordinates and appointed Democrats to the vacancies. This has ruined some individuals and benefitted others; but it has not helped your party, and it has increased the expenses of the District and lowered the standard of competency among the officials.

Will you deny that Messrs. Dent and Morgan are Democrats? I will not affirm that they are, but I do affirm that they are as good as any you can find in this District. Twenty years ago there were a great many stiff Democrats in Washington and Georgetown; but Republican ascendancy seems to have taken the starch out of all who are unburied. In politics they are Dugald Dalgettys, fighting for whichever side pays best. Generally neither side wants them. In political campaigns they give lazy good wishes to the Democracy, but little or no money; and if they give they always hedge by giving an equal sum to the Republicans. They have, however, retained the narrow prejudices of the provincial Virginian. In their views of education they have not kept up with the Northern Democracy, being at least half a century behind such Democrats as Mr. Cobb, of Indiana. They are always ready, however, to pay court to the succcessful candidate for the Presidency.

At inauguration times and balls, whether in honor of Grant, Hayes or Garfield, they assume control and jostle Republicans out of the way. They would have been equally demonstrative for McClellan, Tilden or Hancock. What use can your party have for such supple-jacks?

"God bless the Rebels!" cried the traitor clan.
"God bless the Union!" shout they to a man.
"God bless great Grant, and General Garfield, too!
"God bless our Arthur, to the country true!"
And in the White House, should Old Nick revel
As President, they'd cry, "God bless the Devil!"

XII.

With this chapter I leave the Commissioners for the present to public opinion and the President. Your readers will bear me witness that I have not abused the privilege of the press; I have not meddled with the private life of either Commissioner. They are public men, and as such I have arraigned them.

Nor am I an anonymous accuser: I have not entered Columbia Building as Æneas entered Dido's palace—enveloped in a cloud. Though I write over an initial my full name is no secret—the Commissioners have known it from the first number.

To give voice to the complaints made for months and years by thoughtful and observant citizens was somebody's duty. Why not mine? If any one is impartial I am? The Commissioners have never wronged me personally. I have nothing to avenge. Their office I would not accept. I have nothing to gain. And I propose no candidate. I am the advocate of fair play in local politics—that is all.

If it be said that I have expressed myself sharply, I admit and justify. When the Hebrew prophet was asked, "Doest thou well to be angry?" he answered, "I do well." The abuses, wrongs, carelessness, corruption and stupidity borne long by a patient public had excited in me a lively indignation. Musing upon these things the fire burned, and necessity was on me to write.

I have stated the facts fairly. Every one has been proved by official reports, letters signed by the culprits, speeches

made in Congress, court records, official estimates, or sworn testimony of Mr. Dent or others. I have used demonstrations, not scandal. If I had colored any fact too highly Messrs. Dent and Morgan would have contradicted; if I had invented any they would have had me impaled in the daily press. Their guilty consciousness has made them submit to punishment. They know that I am thoroughly versed in the facts, and are afraid to take issue with me on a single material point. They are satisfied with denouncing me as a malicious person and mischief-maker.

My chapter on the favoritism to the railroad companies was, however, more than they could bear. Afraid to contradict me directly, or anybody over their own signatures, they authorize the *Star* reporter to contradict the statements in the slightly inaccurate form in which they appeared in the New York *Herald*. In regard to the deficiency discovered last week in the accounts of the Tax Collector's cashier the *Herald* said:

"The wonder is that it is not $500,000. The management of the finances of the District of Columbia would be a disgrace even to the cashier of a Newark bank. It is a notorious fact that steam railroad corporations, street railway companies and other influential combinations have not paid a cent of tax to the District, and even prominent individuals openly evade the tax law. The slight alleged deficiency is supposed to be due to the error of the examining clerks, and the actual shortage, which, as the Commissioners have been aware of for months, is said to be between $400,000 and $500,000."

The reporter for the *Star* says of the above:

"The attention of the District Commissioners was called to this statement to-day, and they pronounced it an outrageous libel, without a particle of foundation. The taxes were never so closely collected as now, they say, as shown by the comparative statements of different years. The railroad companies are paying all their general taxes. Some cases of special taxes are in litigation, the Commissioners having sued the companies for the dues."

The *Herald* writer has used the word "tax" instead of "special assessment," and the word "shortage" to cover all losses from incompetency and favoritism. Barring these inaccuracies, he is correct, as I have shown in a previous chapter.

In their denial, (which they don't sign and may repudiate,) the Commissioners do not really deny my charges; they evade them. I charged and proved that a certain "prominent individual" had evaded seven-eighths of his special assessment. Mr. Dent does not deny that. I charged and proved that Mr. Thompson's street-car company, and

Mr. Willard's, and the Washington and Georgetown, had not for years paid a cent of their special assessment; that Mr. Willard's company had not been sued at all; that the two others had each been sued for a less sum, by many thousand dollars, than the Commissioners' books show to be due; and that the legal interest had been lost on all these assessments by the neglect to issue lien certificates. The Commissiohers deny none of these things, except by a faint implication. By evading they confess. I proved last week that what the *Herald* calls "shortage" amounts to several hundred thousand dollars. If my statements were "an outrageous libel" the courts are open.*

Another Shortage.

While on the subject I make another charge. It is difinite: Will the Commissioners deny it?

The law of May 21, 1872, (17th Stat. at Large, page 140,) granting to the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Company its present valuable depot site on Sixth street, near Pennsylvania avenue, provides: "And the said property so occupied by said company, together with the improvements which may be put thereon, shall be subject to tax by the District of Columbia, and to be used exclusively for the support of the public schools in said District."

The tax, if fairly assessed, must amount to about $7,000 yearly. The law was passed nine years ago. I charge that since Messrs. Dent and Morgan have been in office not one

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*By way of defense to my charges of favoritism to the street railway companies, the Commissioners have published a statement of Attorney Riddle's, dated October 31, 1881, in relation to the claims of the District against those companies. That this document falls far short of a defense will be seen on comparing it with the charges, one by one.

First Charge. That the Metropolitan, Washington and Georgetown and Columbia Companies each owe a large amount to the District for paving their tracks. Mr. Riddle admits this.

Second Charge. That the Commissioners have never issued a lien certificate for such claims, or any of them. Mr. Riddle admits this, but pleads that before June 11, 1878, they had no legal right to issue such certificate. Then my charge is sustained for the three years and five months since June 11, '78.

Third Charge. That the Commissioners did not sue the two former companies until November, 1880, when a large part of the claim had been barred by statute. Mr. Riddle admits.

Fourth Charge. That when they did sue, it was not for the amount shown by their own books to be due, but *for a great many thousand dollars less.* Mr. Riddle does not deny this.

Fifth Charge. That the two suits did not include any interest. Mr. R. does not deny this.

Sixth Charge. That the Commissioners did not sue the Columbia Company (Mr. Willard's) at all. Mr. R. says they did, and that the suit is pending in the General Term. I now repeat the charge, after having caused a careful examination of the calendar of the General Term. If any lawyer can find such a case on that calendar, or if Mr. Riddle will write me that it is there, I will acknowledge my error. I do not suspect Mr. R. of bad faith, but of carelessness in making his statement cover the three companies instead of two only.

dollar of that tax has been applied to the support of the public schools. Answer, gentlemen, yes or no; be plain for once.

Shuffling Answers, the Rule.

Last week, for the first time in their administration,* the Commissioners had the tax collector's books examined. They ought to have been examined daily. Defalcation should have been made impossible for more than twenty-four hours. Millions had been collected. Thanks to the honesty of the collector and the moderation of his cashier, the deficit was no more than six thousand dollars. It might have been half a million, and existed for a year; the Commissioners would never have known it. What the community wanted to know was: Why have the Commissioners never had the collector's accounts overhauled? The joyous answer of the Commissioners was: "The District does not lose a cent!!" This is lucky. The proverb says, "God takes care of children, fools and drunken men." Add the District to the number of unfortunates who have no guardian but Providence!

Everybody remembers the "missing coupons." More than $13,500 in coupons were deposited in 1874 with the board of audit, and, it is supposed, were handed over with all other papers of that board to the Commissioners. Messrs. Dent and Morgan never knew, or thought it was their business to know, whether there were any valuable papers there or not. Their first knowledge on the subject was last spring, when a subordinate told them the coupons were missing. What the people wanted to know was the excuse of the Commissioners for not knowing for years of the existence of the coupons. What Messrs. Dent and Morgan answered was, "The District does not lose a cent." They added that the board of audit had lost the coupons, a matter of which they knew nothing.

This trick of saddling the blame on somebody else is a favorite one with Mr. Dent. For faults in the revision of assessments, he blamed Major Twining; for the remission of the Linthicum estate assessment, both his colleagues; and for the "old brewery" case, the school trustees. Wouldn't it be more manly, Mr. Dent, to avow a fault once in a while?

*It is rumored that the Commissioners have never caused Mr. Entwisle's accounts to be audited.

Advice Unasked.

If the Commissioners would listen to me I would speak to them as follows:

Gentlemen, you made a mistake in taking public office. Nature did not fit you for it; she gave you neither business nor other qualities that command the respect of men. You are of those persons who escape blame only when they escape notice. Nor did experience in municipal administration fit you for office. You rushed in where abler men feared to tread. It would have been wiser for you to have aspired to the vacant professorships at the astronomical observatory. President Hayes would probably have appointed you if a rich banker had asked him; and your failure, if as signal, would not have been so widely known or injurious.

Since you have been in office you have drifted helplessly; you have had no plan; you have matured no good measure; you have not known what was being done around you in the affairs supposed to be under your control; coupons, by thousands, have disappeared; millions of taxes have been collected without an audit; and, at a time when you had $419,000 in the Treasury to your credit, you thought you were without a dollar, and so told the chairman of the sub-Committee on Appropriations! To your enemies you have been objects of derision; to your friends, of pity.

As the price of office, you have represented ignorance in its war on intelligence, vice in its war on morality. Against the public schools you have done what you could; attempted to defeat the erection of primary-school and high-school buildings; interfered with building plans; hindered the completion of buildings; delayed for months putting furniture in the school rooms, and attempted to build a nasty station-house for swearing prostitutes and drunkards under the windows of the high-school building, the erection of which you had failed to defeat. You have authorized none but the slenderest salaries to teachers, and have cut down the estimates so that the salaries are not paid in full. You have begrudged every cent spent for philosophical apparatus; and, in three years, your expenditures on this head for the boys' high-school amounts to the immense sum of ten dollars! And this while you have connived at defrauding the schools of what is given them by statute, the amount of fines collected on judgments of the Criminal Court and the annual taxes of several thousand dollars paid, or pay-

able, by the Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Company. You have made membership of the Democratic party a qualification for the majority of the members of the school board, ignoring the hundreds of Republicans distinguished for their intelligent zeal for education; and you have so stripped the Board itself of power that it cannot order the repair of a broken window pane without your permit through some of your bureaus at Columbia Building.

While you don't want schools at the National Capital, you do want groggeries. You have established these on nearly every square. Every citizen has one close by his house for the particular benefit of his children and servants. The rills of adulterated whisky trickle in every drug store; our groceries smell of it; wholesale liquor houses line our avenues, and the clink of glasses is heard in scores of beer gardens on the principal streets, and once a year you ride in a carriage at the head of a half-mile long procession of liquor barrels and hogsheads! Washington has 168,000 inhabitants and, counting tippling saloons, licensed and unlicensed, wholesale stores, breweries, beer gardens, grocery stores and apothecary shops, 1,000 drinking establishments! One to every 168 men, women and children! And one of you spends much of his time in devising evasions of the license law for the further increase of the number of tippling places! One of his brilliant discoveries is that the United States does not own the Interior or Post-Office, or Treasury Building, and that, therefore, he, said Commissioner, can license saloons opposite them without asking the consent of the owner, as required by law.

You are in a most unhappy condition. You cannot please your supporters without violating the law, or displease them without losing your office.

Will you pretend to President Arthur that you are Republicans? That might do for Mr. Hayes, who was rather anxious to be imposed upon in that matter; but will it do for the present Executive, who needs no one to remind him that official zeal which begins in hypocrisy must end in treachery?

Get your reports ready, gentlemen; send in your resignations, and leave your places to men representing the intelligent, moral and patriotic part of the community. And so, farewell! H.

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